DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 321 EC 309 502

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TITLE	RECAP--Teacher Preparation Project: Improving the Preparation of Personnel To Serve Children with High-Incidence Disabilities. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	Tennessee State Univ., Nashville.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2002-08-00
NOTE	8p.
CONTRACT	H325H990116
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Behavior Change; *Behavior Disorders; *Classroom Techniques; Discipline; Elementary Secondary Education; *Emotional Disturbances; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; *Special Education Teachers; Teacher Certification; Teaching Models
IDENTIFIERS	*Nashville Metropolitan Public Schools TN; Tennessee State University

ABSTRACT

This final report describes activities and accomplishments of a project that provided an intensive 1-year training program for teachers working with students with emotional or behavior disorders. Forty-seven teachers (27 from under-represented populations) from the Nashville (Tennessee) Public School System were recruited and trained. All participants either had or achieved certification after the project ended. Training emphasized behavior management skills using the RECAP (Reaching Educators and Parents) program, an empirically derived, structured mental health curriculum. RECAP is a field-based training model that includes in-class, on-the-job instruction and monitoring by a trained clinician/educator. Trainees also took academic courses leading to special education certification through the Special Education Institute, a state-sponsored partnership with Tennessee State University. Project results also suggested reduced special education teacher attrition and successful institutional collaboration. The project was rated as an extremely effective and practical training model by participants as well as by the Nashville Public School Director of Special Education. However, the project was unable to create a structure for continuation and dissemination. Recommendations for future personnel preparation programs are offered. (DB)

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RECAP – Teacher Preparation Project: Improving the Preparation of Personnel To Serve Children with High-Incidence Disabilities. Final Report.

Cornell D. Lane, Project Director

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OMB No. 1890-0005
Exp. Date: 07/31/00

U.S. Department of Education
GRANT PERFORMANCE REPORT
COVER SHEET

1. Performance Reporting Period

9/1/01 - 8/31/02

2. PR/Award No. (Block 5 on Grant Award Notification)

H325H990116

3. Project Title: RECAP - Teacher Preparation Project: Improving the Preparation of Personnel to Serve Children with High-Incidence Disabilities

4. Recipient Information

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6. Cumulative Expenditures

Federal: $ 546,130.49

Non Federal: $

7. Annual Certification(s) of IRB approval

Yes ____ No ____ XX

8. Authorized Representative Information

To the best of my knowledge and belief, all data in this performance report are true and correct.

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12/13/02
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this project is to address the critical shortage and high attrition rate of teachers serving students with emotional and behavioral disturbance. A specially tailored program is offered (1) to teachers employed without certification and on waiver/permit in special education classrooms, and (2) to regular and special education teachers serving children with emotional/behavioral disturbances and who commit to seeking certification or an advanced degree in special education. The program provides these educators with essential behavioral management skills and provides credit toward state accepted special education certification. Training in behavior management skills is implemented using the RECAP program (Reaching Educators Children and Parents), an empirically derived, structured mental health curriculum Designed to address the social, emotional and behavioral problems of children. RECAP is a field-based training model that includes in-class, on-the-job instruction and monitoring from a trained clinician/educator. Trainees also take academic courses leading to special education certification through the Special Education Institute, a state sponsored partnership with Tennessee State University, which assists teachers in securing special education certification.

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PROJECT GOALS

The overriding goal of this Project was to provide an intensive one (1) year training program for teachers working with high need students. Teachers in the Nashville Public School System were recruited and trained on-site, in the classroom by clinician/educators using the RECAP model which employs a structured mental health curriculum to help teachers work more effectively with difficult behaviors through shaping positive social skills and good decision making. The goals of the Project were:

(1) *Recruit and train 48 teachers* --- Forty-eight (48) teachers employed as teachers in classrooms for children with emotional disturbances or as resource teachers were recruited and trained. Priorities in recruitment included teachers working without certification and teachers from under represented populations. Over the three (3) years of the Project seventeen (17) of the teachers did have certification and twenty-seven (27)/ (56%) were from under represented populations. Sixteen (16) of the seventeen (17) non-certified teachers were certified after the Project and one (1) was exited from the program forty-seven (47) of the forty-eight (48) students successfully completed the program.

(2) *Reduce Attrition* --- In 1998 the Nashville Public Schools reported a twenty-five percent (25%) annual attrition rate for special education teachers while the national average was eleven percent (11%). The Project proposed to reduce attrition by increasing behavior management skills. Over the three (3) year, four (4) of the forty-eight (48) teachers left special education classrooms yielding a much improved attrition rate of eight-point- three- percent (8.3%).

(3) *Train teachers for work in high poverty schools* --- Currently thirty-four (34) of the forty-four (44) teachers (77%) are teaching in a high poverty and/or inner city school.

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(4) *Increase interest in RECAP training* --- Meeting this goal was reflected by thirty-five (35%) more applicants than the Project could accommodate and numerous requests for training on school system surveys used in planning professional development activities.

(5) *Institutional collaboration* --- The Project was administered by Tennessee State University with collaborative participation from Vanderbilt University, State of Tennessee Department of Education and the Nashville Public Schools. Vanderbilt provided the RECAP training which was the core training component, the State Department funded three (3) hours of coursework through the Special Education Institute of Tennessee State University; the Nashville Public Schools assisted in recruitment, provided meeting spaces and accommodated the RECAP consultants who worked three (3) to four (4) hours each week with each student in the classroom.

(6) *Create a State pilot project* --- The State Department of Education committed to a three (3) phase plan to expand this Project model to train special education teachers across the state beginning in 2002. A major shortfall in the state budget made funding impossible.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Beyond the accomplishments listed with the above goals, the Project was rated as an extremely effective and practical training model by participants. Many participants (employed teachers) stated on summary evaluations that RECAP training should be required of all teachers in special and regular classrooms. Three (3) participants, who were in their first year of teaching, reported that "they would not have made it" without RECAP and would have left the special education classroom. Most participants stated that the training consultants in the classrooms were the "difference" and the significant factor in making the training successful. The well developed, "teacher friendly" RECAP curriculum was also seen as an important asset. The effectiveness of the RECAP model was also endorsed by the Director of Special Education and her staff in the

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Nashville Schools, who requested that "all" special education teachers be trained. Further, as mentioned earlier, the State Director of Special Education committed to a state-wide RECAP project before a budget shortfall eliminated funds.

WEAKNESSES

The primary weakness in the Project lies in its failure to create a structure for continuation and dissemination. The Special Education Department at Tennessee State University does not possess the staff and resources to provide on-site instruction and classroom consultation. As a Result, the RECAP model of personnel preparation used in this Project is on a "back burner" given that funding efforts for continuation were unsuccessful.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications for future personnel preparation practices are profound based on the reports of teachers participating in the Project and school administrators, who observed the impact of the training. There was a general consensus that the RECAP training model, employing a structured mental health curriculum and intensive classroom consultation, was an outstanding training model. For a personnel preparation component in behavior management that worked extremely well in this Project follow this formula:

1. Recruit teachers who want to be more effective in the classroom
2. Provide a monetary stipend ($1,000 or $2,000) to be awarded after successful completion of the program
3. Provide academic credit (the RECAP component carried six (6) hours of university credit)
4. Employ a well developed, structured curriculum like RECAP
5. Include classroom consultation from effective clinician/educators
6. Conduct group meeting (a class or seminar) with student participants focusing on practices

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